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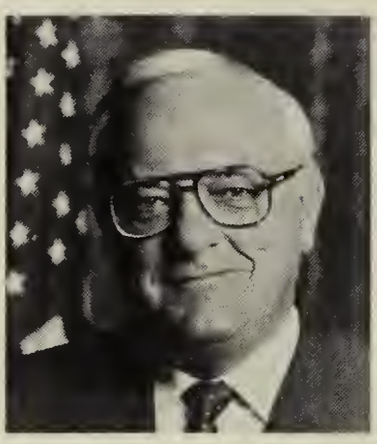
ILLINOIS STATE LIBRARY

MAPPING YOUR PAST:

Genealogy at the State Archives

George H. Ryan
Secretary of State
and State Archivist



"Time in a building"

Many of us enjoy learning about our ancestors or other people from years gone by; it's a way to more fully appreciate our heritage as families and as a state.

That is why I am pleased that one of my roles as Secretary of State is to serve as State Archivist. This state agency has a wealth of information available — all of which can provide valuable clues in researching the generations that went before us. And as you'll learn in this brochure, those of us at the State Archives look forward to working with you in using this historical material. Whether through a personal visit to the Archives or through correspondence, we can be of assistance in locating the information you need. Please let us know how we can best work with you, as you explore your own "maps to the past."

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Secretary of State

Our doors are open.

When extensive research is involved, many genealogists find it's best done in person at the Illinois State Archives — and our reference staff is here to help. We're open 8-4:30 Mon.-Fri., and Sat. 8-3:30 (except holiday weekends). The Archives Building is located just south of the State Capitol grounds.

Or drop us a line.

The Archives staff will also do research based on mail requests, charging only for photocopies. But please follow these guidelines:

- Request no more than two specific names or items per mailing.
- Doing a name search? Try to provide: (1) the individual's complete name, age, and birthplace. Also the same info for spouse and children, if possible (2) county and township names (3) the name of the record to be searched as well as its date span.
- Wait until you've received a response to your first request before submitting additional ones.

Count on us for old census info.

The Archives has both state and federal census records that span 100 years: 1810-1910.

1810-1860: Indexes available covering state and decen-

nial federal census records. Note: the only reasonably complete state census for this period, 1855, has only names of the heads of households; other family entries are simple tallies. This is true for all pre-1850 federal censuses.

1865: Since this final state census is only partially indexed, Archives staff also needs a township name when using it. Unindexed schedules of cities cannot be searched by staff. This census lists only heads of households.

1870: With a limited county index, this census needs both county and township locations for best search results. No city searches.

1880: Index for this census lists only households with children under 10 years of age. This index can be searched for names of household heads, and a review of schedules if township is provided. No city searches.

1890: The federal census was lost in a Washington D.C. fire in 1921.

1900-1910: Indexes can be searched for names of household heads, but not for the actual schedules (note that an index to each census exists).

The Archives also has the special federal decennial censuses, 1850-1880. Two are profession-specific: agriculture (1850-1880), and industry (1850-1870). The 1880 census also profiles the handicapped, the dependent, and the delinquent.

Births, Deaths, and Wedding Bells.

Births and deaths were first recorded with some regularity in 1877, and are best documented in

1929
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the county in which the event occurred — although some are available through Archives. The Illinois Dept. of Public Health (605 W. Jefferson St., Springfield, IL 62702; 217/782-6553) also maintains such records after 1916. Those Illinois deaths recorded in 1916 - 1938 are available on an Archives microfilm index.

In addition, the Archives has complete federal mortality schedules for 1850, 1860, and 1880. For 1870, the federal mortality schedules are available only for those counties alphabetically listed after Kankakee County. In all four mortality schedules, the records reflect only those deaths occurring during the year before enumeration.

With respect to marriage records, a statewide computerized index is being created in cooperation with the Illinois State Genealogical Society. Focusing on marriage records pre-1818 to 1900, the index already catalogs portions of 50 counties.

Those who served in wars of old.

Interested in the Illinois units fighting during the War of 1812? Or the Black Hawk War, Mexican War, Civil War, or Spanish-American War? The Archives has name indexes for Illinois units serving during these conflicts.

Also available are federal World War I draft registration records.

Postwar information on veterans and spouses may be found in the Archives' resident files of the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Home (1887-1967) and the Illinois Soldiers' Widows' Home (1896-1960). Some information restrictions apply.

Also available are microfilm records of some pension information from the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812; records from the National Home in Danville (1898-1934); and the publication, "Honor Roll of Veterans Buried in Illinois."

Unexpected sources.

Many state institutions have records with the Archives, such as the Illinois School for the Deaf — although to be accessed, at least 75 years must have lapsed since the record was first established. All mental health records are permanently closed. Holdings of state penitentiary records and related parole files also contain genealogical information.

Records of the land.

Only the first purchaser of land from the federal or state government is included in the Archives' indexed records; all subsequent trans-

actions are recorded with the county recorder. The Archives has the purchaser's name and residence, the date the land was purchased, and its legal description. Aspects such as the buyer's former residence are not indicated.

Local level, county level.

Staff can search indexes of specific county histories and provide copies of biographical sketches. In addition, a wealth of genealogical information is available through the many local records of a special Archives unit called the Illinois Regional Archives Depositories (IRAD). There are seven such outlets, located within state universities around the state. IRAD staff will perform a limited amount of research upon request.

Reaching out through interlibrary loan.

Several state and federal censuses are available through the interlibrary loan system of the Illinois State Library. There are also available war indexes and a census records index for 1810-1855; your local librarian must direct this request to the Illinois State Library.

Other aspects.

In addition to the materials detailed above, those interested in genealogy may find the following

points of information to be of interest:

Since 1985 the Illinois State Archives has worked with the Illinois State Genealogical Society (ISGS) on projects of mutual genealogical interest such as the marriage records project. You may wish to address inquiries to the Society at its office in the Archives Building by contacting: ISGS, P.O. Box 10195, Springfield, IL 62791 (217/789-1968).

You may also wish to consult the Archives' less frequently examined records. The guide, "The Descriptive Inventory of the Archives of the State of Illinois," lists all available state record series. If a copy cannot be found through your local library, it can be purchased for $20 from the Archives.

A new guide listing all local records in the Illinois Regional Archives Depositories — including Cook County and Chicago — will be available in early 1992.

More information.

Please direct all inquiries to:
The Illinois State Archives
Archives Building
Springfield, Illinois 62756
(217) 782-4682
Please note that the Illinois Regional Archives Depositories (IRAD) is located at the same address; phone (217) 782-3645.

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